



NRC NEWS

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NRC ISSUES LICENSE TO U.S. ENRICHMENT CORPORATION FOR LEAD CASCADE URANIUM ENRICHMENT FACILITY

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has issued a license to the U.S. Enrichment Corporation Inc. (USEC) to construct and operate a uranium enrichment test and demonstration facility at the Portsmouth Gaseous Diffusion Plant site in Piketon, Ohio.

The American Centrifuge Lead Cascade Facility, also known as the Lead Cascade, will be based on the U.S. Department of Energy's centrifuge technology for enriching uranium for use in producing fuel for nuclear reactors. The Lead Cascade will consist of up to 240 full-scale centrifuges, which will recycle the enriched and depleted uranium; the only withdrawals of uranium from the cascade will be small samples for quality control analysis. The license authorizes the facility to possess and use up to 250 kilograms of uranium hexafluoride for up to five years.

USEC applied for the license to build and operate the facility on February 12, 2003. In January, the NRC issued an environmental assessment, concluding there would be no significant environmental impact from the facility, and a safety evaluation report, concluding that USEC's proposed programs would provide adequate safeguards and protection for the health and safety of workers, the public and the environment. The NRC held off issuing a license at that time until USEC had finalized lease arrangements for the facility with DOE, which owns the Portsmouth plant.

USEC intends to follow construction of the Lead Cascade with a full-scale uranium enrichment plant using centrifuge technology. On January 12, USEC announced plans to build this centrifuge plant at the Piketon site. USEC is expected to submit a license application to the NRC for this facility this August.

For more information about uranium enrichment, see the NRC's Fact Sheet at <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/doc-collections/fact-sheets/enrichment.html> .

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